

**IN THE CLAIMS:**

Please **amend claims 1-7** as indicated below, and **add claims 8-12** as follows:

1. (Currently amended) A method of permitting secure access between a service external to a network firewall and a client internal to the firewall, comprising the steps of:

[[ - ]] (a) effecting an HTTP GET operation or equivalent thereof from the client to establish a communications socket at the client for communicating data ~~[[from]]~~ between the service ~~[[to]]~~ and the client;

[[ - ]] (b) ~~after a predetermined interval effecting another GET operation or equivalent thereof to close~~closing the existing communications socket, ~~irrespective of whether access~~ and opening a new communications socket at the client for communicating data between the service and the client is required to continue by performing another GET operation or equivalent thereof after a predetermined time interval; and

[[ - ]] (c) repeating ~~steps (a) and~~ step (b) while access between the service and the client is required to continue without repeating step (a).

2. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the predetermined time interval is ~~less than another~~ set with

reference to a specific time interval after which ~~client enforces~~  
software on the client side of the firewall enforces termination  
of a client communications socket established by [[a]] said GET  
operation or equivalent thereof, said predetermined time interval  
being set to be less than said specific time interval.

3. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1 ~~or claim 2~~,  
wherein information is transferred from the client to the service  
by an HTTP POST operation or equivalent thereof.

4. (Currently amended) The method of ~~any one of the~~  
~~preceding claims~~ claim 1, wherein successive messages transferred  
between the client and the service are identified by a globally-  
unique identification created by the client and communicated to  
the service.

5. (Currently amended) The method of claim 4, wherein the  
~~globally-unique~~ globally unique identification is communicated via  
an HTTP GET or POST operation or equivalent thereof.

6. (Currently amended) The method of claim 5, wherein the  
~~globally-unique~~ globally unique identification is communicated in  
a URI relative path component.

7. (Currently amended) The method of ~~any one of the~~  
~~preceding claims~~ claim 2, wherein said software provides a proxy

service for communications with the client ~~traverse a proxy service located on the client side of the firewall.~~

8. (New) Apparatus for permitting secure access through a network firewall with a service, said apparatus comprising:

a communications interface for interfacing the apparatus with said network, the communications interface being arranged to open and close communications sockets;

a first control arrangement for using the communications interface to effect a first HTTP GET operation or equivalent thereof in respect of said service thereby to cause the latter to establish a communications socket for communicating data between the service and the client;

a second control arrangement for using the communications interface to effect another GET operation or equivalent thereof in respect of said service a predetermined time interval after a most recent GET operation effected by the apparatus in respect of said service, thereby to close the existing said communications socket and to open a new communications socket for communicating data between said service and the client; and

a third control arrangement for causing the second control arrangement to terminate its operation when access between the service and the client is no longer required.

9. (New) The apparatus of claim 8, further comprising an identification generation arrangement for generating a globally-unique identification identifying the service-client communications connection established through the succession of sockets created by the communications interface for data between said service and client, the first and second control arrangements and the communications interface together being arranged to send this globally-unique identification to the server in effecting each GET operation or equivalent thereof.

10. (New) A system comprising the apparatus of claim 8 and a proxy server through which communications between the apparatus and said service are arranged to pass, the proxy server being arranged to cause the communication socket on the apparatus to be closed after a specific time interval, said predetermined time interval being less than said specific time interval.

11. (New) A computer-readable medium storing a computer program arranged to condition a program-controlled networked computer, when executed by the latter, to access a service beyond a network firewall by steps of:

(a) effecting an HTTP GET operation or equivalent thereof from the client to establish a communications socket at the client for communicating data between said service and the client;

(b) after a predetermined time interval effecting another GET operation or equivalent thereof to close the existing communications socket and open a new communications socket at the client for communicating data between the same said service and the client; and

(c) repeating step (b) while access between the service and the client is required to continue without repeating step (a).

**12.** (New) The method of claim **2**, wherein information is transferred from the client to the service by an HTTP POST operation or equivalent thereof.